SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



INDUCTIVE DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Ten · Verses 1–33

Flee From Idolatry — Do All to the Glory of God

NASB 1995 | OBSERVE · INTERPRET · APPLY | TWO VOICES

One passage, read inductively and heard through two teachers — **John MacArthur** and **David Guzik** — with the key verses marked in the Berean standard.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 10:1–33

Thirty-three verses · five movements

THE METHOD

Inductive

Observe · Interpret · Apply

WHAT'S INSIDE

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❖

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." — 1 Corinthians 10:12

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 10:1–33

Flee From Idolatry — Do All to the Glory of God

† How to Read This Study

The inductive method asks three questions of every paragraph. **Observe** — what does the text actually say? Who, what, when, where, which words repeat, where are the commands and the contrasts? **Interpret** — what did it mean to Paul and the Corinthians, and why? **Apply** — what does it ask of me now? Each movement below walks those three steps. The teachers are heard at the interpretation step, where they belong; the observations come first, from the text alone. Where they differ, each is given in his own terms.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Key verses carry the six Berean marks. Mark what the text says — a phrase, never a sentence, and never an interpretation.

▲ GOD ▭ COMMAND ⇄ REPEATED WORD ⚠ SIN / WARNING ★ PROMISE ◷ TIME / PLACE / CONTRAST

KEY VERSE

Is not ⇄ the cup of blessing which we bless ▲ a sharing in the blood of Christ?
Is not ⇄ the bread which we break ▲ a sharing in the body of Christ?

1 CORINTHIANS 10:16 · NASB 1995

† Before the Passage

Chapter 10 finishes an argument that began in chapter 8. The Corinthians had written to Paul about “things sacrificed to idols” (8:1). Much of the meat in a Greek city passed through a temple before it reached a table, and the city’s social life ran through those temples — trade-guild dinners, family celebrations, civic feasts. The “strong” in the church said, rightly, that an idol is nothing (8:4), and concluded that they could eat anywhere. Paul agreed with their theology and disagreed with their conclusion. In chapter 8 he answered with love for the weaker brother; in chapter 9 with his own example of giving up rights for the gospel and of disciplining himself so as not to be “disqualified” (9:27). Chapter 10 picks up that last word and turns it into a warning.

The warning comes from Israel. Every one of them was rescued, baptized into Moses, fed with bread from heaven and given water from the rock — and most of them died in the wilderness. Privilege did

not protect them from idolatry, immorality, testing God and grumbling. So Paul writes: “let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (v.12), promises that God is faithful in every temptation (v.13), and commands, “flee from idolatry” (v.14). Then he explains why a believer cannot sit at an idol’s feast: the Lord’s table is a real sharing in Christ, and behind the idol stand real demons (vv.16–22). Only then does he return to the market and the dinner party, where freedom is real but measured by love (vv.23–30) — and he ends with one rule for all of life: “do all to the glory of God” (v.31).

† The Text, Marked · KJV

The whole passage in the King James text with every Berean mark applied — the same marks the import file carries, so what you see here is what Berean will show.

▲ GOD ▭ COMMAND ⇄ REPEATED WORD ⚠ SIN / WARNING ★ PROMISE ◷ TIME / PLACE / CONTRAST

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that ⇄ all our fathers were under the cloud, and ⇄ all passed through the sea;

2 And ⇄ were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And ⇄ did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And ⇄ did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and ▲ that Rock was Christ.

5 But with many of them ⚠ God was not well pleased: for they were ⚠ overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now ⇄ these things were our examples, to the intent we should not ⚠ lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 ▭ Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 ▭ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 ▭ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 ▭ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were ⚠ destroyed of the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened unto them ⇄ for ensamples: and they are ▭ written for our admonition, upon whom ◷ the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore ▭ let him that thinketh he standeth take heed ⚠ lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but ▲ God is faithful, who ★ will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also ★ make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, ▭ flee from idolatry.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not ▲ the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not ▲ the communion of the body of Christ?

17 For we being many are ⇄ one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to ⚠ devils, and not to God: and

I would not that ye should have fellowship with ⚠ devils.

21 ⚠ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of ⚠ devils: ⚠ ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of ⚠ devils.

22 Do we ⚠ provoke the Lord to jealousy? ⚠ are we stronger than he?

23 ⇄ All things are lawful for me, but ◷ all things are not expedient: ⇄ all things are lawful for me, but ◷ all things edify not.

24 ▭ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for ⇄ conscience sake:

26 For ▲ the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for ⇄ conscience sake.

28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, ▭ eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for ⇄ conscience sake: for ▲ the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

29 ⇄ Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for ◷ why is my liberty judged of another man's ⇄ conscience?

30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or ⇄ whatsoever ye do, ▭ do all to the glory of God.

32 ▭ Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

33 Even as I please all men in all things, ▭ not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, ★ that they may be saved.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-33 · KING JAMES VERSION · 46 MARKS

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5

All of Them — Nevertheless

Every privilege, and most of them fell

> 1 *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were ⇄ all under the cloud and ⇄ all passed through the sea;* 2 *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;* 3 *and all ate the same spiritual food;* 4 *and ⇄ all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and ▲ the rock was Christ.* 5 ◷ *Nevertheless, with most of them ⚠ God was not well-pleased; for they were ⚠ laid low in the wilderness.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- **All** five times in four verses: all under the cloud, all through the sea, all baptized, all ate, all drank (vv.1–4).
- Five privileges: the **cloud**, the **sea**, **baptized into Moses**, **spiritual food**, **spiritual drink**.
- A startling identification (v.4): **the rock was Christ**.
- One word turns the paragraph (v.5): **Nevertheless**.
- Contrast: **all** received the privileges; **most of them** fell. God was **not well-pleased**; they were **laid low in the wilderness**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Paul calls the Israelites "our fathers" — to a largely Gentile church. The church shares Israel's story, so Israel's story is a warning to the church. And the story he chooses is a story of privilege. Every Israelite was under the cloud of God's presence (Exodus 13:21), every one walked through the sea on dry ground (Exodus 14:22), every one was joined to Moses as his people, every one ate manna and drank water from the rock. Paul calls the food and drink "spiritual" because God gave them and because they pointed to Christ, who says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Then he says the rock itself "was Christ": the One who stood by Israel and supplied them in the desert was the Son of God before His incarnation.

Then the single word: "Nevertheless." With most of them God was not pleased. Of the adult generation that left Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the land (Numbers 14:29–30). The Corinthians had their own "all" — all baptized, all at the Lord's table — and some of them thought those privileges made them safe at an idol's feast. Paul's answer is the wilderness, full of graves of people who had been baptized and fed.

Paul does not stop here to settle whether those who fell had ever truly trusted God; faithful readers differ on that. His point is narrower and sharper: outward privilege guarantees nothing, and the same God who judged them is faithful to keep the one who takes heed and flees (vv.12–14).

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads vv.1–5 as a warning against overconfidence: Israel had every spiritual advantage, yet most died under God's judgment because of sin. He takes "baptized into Moses" as identification with Moses as leader, not a water rite, and "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink" as real provisions of supernatural origin. On "the rock was Christ," he notes the Jewish tradition of a rock that literally followed Israel and says Paul is not endorsing it: the true source of Israel's supply was the preincarnate Christ, who went with His people throughout the wilderness. The lesson is that privilege and religious experience are no substitute for obedience.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik stresses the repeated "all": every Israelite enjoyed the same blessings, yet that did not keep them from falling. He links the cloud and the sea to baptism as a picture of being identified with a leader. He mentions the rabbinic legend of a rock or well that rolled after Israel through the desert, and says Paul's point is that the real supply came from Christ Himself, present with Israel in the wilderness. His application is pointed: a person can share in every spiritual blessing — baptism, communion, fellowship — and still fall, if the heart is not right with God.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *What privileges am I counting on — my baptism, my church, my years in the faith — in place of present obedience?*
- *Christ was with Israel in the desert and is with me in mine. Where do I need to drink from the Rock this week instead of from the world?*

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-13

Written for Our Instruction

Five sins, one warning, one promise

6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them ⇄ as an example, and they were ▭ written for our instruction, upon whom ◷ the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore ▭ let him who thinks he stands take heed ⚠ that he does not fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and ▲ God is faithful, who ★ will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation ★ will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-13 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- **Examples** twice (vv.6, 11) — the events happened, and they were **written for our instruction**.
- Five sins, four with **as some of them**: **craving evil things** (v.6), **idolatry** (v.7), **immorality** (v.8), **trying the Lord** (v.9), **grumbling** (v.10).
- Three of the sins carry a stated judgment: **twenty-three thousand fell in one day** (v.8); **destroyed by the serpents** (v.9); **destroyed by the destroyer** (v.10).
- A warning (v.12): **let him who thinks he stands take heed**.
- A promise (v.13): temptation **common to man**; **God is faithful**; **not … beyond what you are able**; **the way of escape**; **able to endure it**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Paul names five sins, and each one points back to a scene in Numbers or Exodus. *Craving*: Israel wept for the meat of Egypt and despised the manna (Numbers 11). *Idolatry*: the golden calf, where "the people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play" (Exodus 32:6, as Paul quotes it) — a feast held in honor of an idol, exactly the kind of meal the Corinthians wanted to keep attending. *Immorality*: Baal of Peor, where idol feasts and sexual sin went together (Numbers 25). *Testing the Lord*: the people spoke against God and the serpents came (Numbers 21). *Grumbling*: the rebellion after the spies, and Korah's (Numbers 14; 16). Numbers 25:9 counts 24,000 dead in the plague; Paul says 23,000 "fell in one day" — one common explanation is that Moses gives the plague's total and Paul the number who died on a single day.

These things "were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The church lives at the climax of history, and its Bible is full of warnings for it. So: "let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." The man most at risk is the one most sure of himself — the strong Corinthian who says the idol is nothing and walks into its temple to eat.

Then Paul turns from warning to comfort, because a frightened church needs to know it can stand. Every temptation is "common to man" — nothing I face is unique. God is faithful: He measures what He allows, and with every temptation He supplies the way out. The promise is not that temptation will be easy, but that it will be endurable, and that obedience will always be possible. And in context the first way of escape is named in the next verse: run.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur sees in vv.6–11 a catalogue of Israel's sins recorded as permanent warnings, all of them arising from evil desire. He treats the golden calf, Baal of Peor, the serpents and the grumbling as patterns the Corinthians were repeating in their attraction to pagan feasts and in their complaining. On v.12 he warns against the overconfidence of the "strong." On v.13 he reads *peirasmos* as including both trials and temptations: God controls their intensity, never allows more than a believer can bear, and always provides the means to resist. He emphasizes that this means no Christian can say he was forced to sin.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik walks through each of the five sins with its Old Testament story, noting that Israel's idolatry began with craving and that their judgments are recorded so we do not need to learn by experience. On "let him who thinks he stands," he warns that the time we are most confident is often when we are most vulnerable. On v.13 he stresses three comforts — our temptations are common, God is faithful, and there is always a way of escape — and adds that the way of escape is often simply to get out, to flee, which is exactly what v.14 commands. He also notes that God does not tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13); He limits and governs what He allows.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Which of the five — craving, idolatry, immorality, testing God, grumbling — is closest to my door this month?*
- *Where am I most sure I could never fall? I will take heed there. And I will look for the way of escape before I need it.*

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22

Flee From Idolatry — One Table

The cup of the Lord and the cup of demons

14 *Therefore, my beloved, ▭ flee from idolatry.* 15 *I speak as to wise men; you judge what I*
say. 16 *Is not ⇄ the cup of blessing which we bless ▲ a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not*
⇄ the bread which we break ▲ a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 *Since there is one bread,*
we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. 18 *Look at the nation Is-*
rael; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? 19 *What do I mean then? That*
a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 *No, but I say that the*
things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not
want you to become sharers in demons. 21 *⚠ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the*
cup of demons; ⚠ you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.
22 *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- A command with affection (v.14): **my beloved**, **flee from idolatry**.
- An appeal to their judgment (v.15): **I speak as to wise men; you judge**.
- Two questions about the Lord's Supper (v.16): the **cup** and the **bread** are **a sharing** in Christ's **blood** and **body**.
- One bread, many people, **one body** (v.17). Israel's worshipers are **sharers in the altar** (v.18).
- The idol is nothing (v.19) — **but** pagan sacrifice is offered **to demons** (v.20). Two flat refusals (v.21): **you cannot … you cannot**. Two closing questions (v.22): **provoke the Lord to jealousy**? **Stronger than He**?

I INTERPRET · what it means

"Therefore" reaches back to vv.1–13: since Israel fell through idolatry, and since God provides the way of escape — run. Paul does not say "be careful around idolatry" but "flee from it," and he says it with tenderness: "my beloved." Then he reasons with them as wise men. Every sacred meal is a sharing. At the Lord's Supper, the cup over which we give thanks and the bread we break are a real participation in what Christ's blood and body accomplished, received together as one body (v.17). In Israel, those who ate the sacrifices shared in the altar (v.18; Leviticus 7:15). Eating at a sacred table joins you to whatever that table belongs to.

Does that make an idol something after all? No (vv.19–20) — the carved figure is wood and stone. But the worship offered to it does not go nowhere. "They sacrificed to demons who were not God" (Deuteronomy 32:17). Behind the nothing-idol stands a real spiritual enemy, and to eat at its feast is to become its partner. So: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons." Not "you should not" — you cannot; the two tables exclude each other. And the first of the last two questions echoes the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21): do we want to provoke the Lord to jealousy, as Israel did? The second answers itself: are we stronger than He is? The "strong" at Corinth are not that strong.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads v.14 as the climax of the warning: the only safe response to idolatry is to run from it. On vv.16–17 he holds that the Lord's Supper is a communion with Christ in which believers commemorate and spiritually participate in His death — not a re-sacrifice and not a change in the elements — and that the one loaf pictures the unity of the body. On vv.19–20 he insists that idols are nothing, yet demons are real, and that idolatry is the worship of demons; Christians who join pagan religious feasts expose themselves to demonic influence. Verse 21 states an absolute incompatibility, and v.22 warns that the Lord is jealous for His people's exclusive devotion.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the tenderness of "my beloved" and the clarity of "flee." He explains "the cup of blessing" as the Passover cup over which thanks was given, and *koinonia* as a real sharing in Christ's body and blood, describing the Lord's Supper as a spiritual communion with Jesus received by faith. He draws out the logic of vv.18–20: eating at a sacred meal means fellowship with the one honored there, and the one behind the idol is a demon. He applies v.21 broadly: we cannot divide our loyalty between Jesus and anything that competes for worship, and v.22 reminds us that God's jealousy is a holy love that will not share us.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *What is my "temple feast" — the place, habit or entertainment I keep near because "it's nothing"? I will flee, not negotiate.*
- *When I next take the cup and the bread, I will remember what I am sharing in — and whose table I belong to.*

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-30

Lawful, but Not Profitable

Freedom at the market and the table, measured by love

23 ⇄ *All things are lawful*, but ◷ *not all things are profitable*. ⇄ *All things are lawful*, but ◷ *not all things edify*. 24 ▭ *Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor*. 25 *Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;* 26 ▲ *FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS*. 27 *If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.* 28 *But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;* 29 *I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?* 30 *If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-30 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- A slogan, twice (v.23): **all things are lawful** — each time answered with **but**: not all **profitable**, not all **edify**.
- The principle (v.24): **let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor**.
- Two settings: the **meat market** (v.25) and an **unbeliever's** dinner (v.27) — **eat anything**, **without asking questions**.
- The reason (v.26), from Psalm 24:1: **the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains**.
- The exception (vv.28–29): if someone says **"This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it** — for **the other man's** conscience. **Conscience** five times in vv.25–29.

I INTERPRET · what it means

"All things are lawful" was a Corinthian slogan (it appears in 6:12 too), and Paul does not deny it. In Christ the food laws are gone; meat is meat. But a Christian does not stop at "is it allowed?" He asks "does it help?" and "does it build up?" — and then, "whom?" "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor." Freedom is real, but it is the freedom of a man who belongs to others in love.

Then Paul gives two everyday cases, and his first word in both is liberty. At the market, buy what is sold; do not interrogate the butcher about where the meat has been, because "the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains" (Psalm 24:1). At an unbeliever's house, eat what is set before you. The meat is not polluted by its history. This is a different setting from vv.14–22: there the meal was in the temple, an act of worship; here it is a kitchen and a dinner table.

But if someone at that table points it out — "This is meat sacrificed to idols" — now the meal says something. Perhaps the speaker is a weaker believer, perhaps the pagan host testing what you believe. Either way, eating now would seem to approve the idol, so do not eat, for his sake. Paul is careful (v.29): my freedom before God is not judged by his conscience — but I will limit its use for his good. And thankfulness stays (v.30): a man who eats with thanks to God should not be slandered for it. Freedom, thanksgiving, love — all three at once.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads v.23 as Paul accepting the principle of Christian liberty while limiting it by two questions — is it beneficial, and does it edify? Verse 24 he calls the governing principle: love seeks the other person's good. In vv.25–27 he finds genuine freedom: food is morally neutral, and a believer need not investigate its origin, because everything belongs to God. In vv.28–29 the situation changes when someone raises the issue of idols; then the believer gives up his right for the sake of the other person's conscience, without surrendering the principle of his liberty before God.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains "all things are lawful" as a Corinthian motto that Paul qualifies rather than rejects: the question is not only "can I?" but "should I?" and "will it help?" He defines the "shambles" (KJV) as the meat market, and draws out the freedom of vv.25–27 — Christians need not be paranoid or legalistic about every possible connection to sin. Then, in v.28, love for the other person sets the limit: when eating would wound someone's conscience or send a message about idols, we lay our freedom down. He stresses that the strong believer gives up the practice, not the truth.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Before I ask "Is this allowed?" I will ask "Does it build up — and whom?"*
- *Where is my freedom real but costly to someone else this week? I will lay it down for him without making it his fault.*

V
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-33

Do All to the Glory of God

Eating, drinking — and whatever you do

31 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or ⇄ whatever you do, ▭ do all to the glory of God.*
32 *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;* 33 *just as I also please all men in all things, ▭ not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, ★ so that they may be saved.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-33 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- The widest command in the chapter (v.31): **eat**, **drink**, **whatever you do** — **do all to the glory of God**.
- Three groups not to offend (v.32): **Jews**, **Greeks**, **the church of God**.
- Paul's own pattern (v.33): **please all men in all things**.
- Contrast (v.33): **not … my own profit** but **the profit of the many**.
- The goal (v.33): **so that they may be saved**. The next verse finishes the thought: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (11:1).

I INTERPRET · what it means

After three chapters on what to eat and where, Paul lifts the whole question to its highest level. The Christian life is not finally governed by a list of permitted and forbidden meals but by a single aim: the glory of God. Eating and drinking — the most ordinary acts of a day — can be done to His glory, which means everything else can too. "Whatever you do" leaves nothing out (compare Colossians 3:17).

Glorifying God has a horizontal edge. "Give no offense" means do not put a stumbling block in anyone's way — not the Jew, not the Greek, not the church. Paul's "please all men" is not people-pleasing for his own comfort; he has just refused that (v.33, "not seeking my own profit"). It is setting aside his preferences so that nothing in his conduct stands between another person and Christ. "So that they may be saved" is the reason behind Paul's whole pattern of life (9:19–23; 10:33). And Paul does not say "do what I say" but "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (11:1) — because Christ is the One who did not please Himself (Romans 15:3).

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur calls v.31 the overarching principle of Christian living: every act, however ordinary, is to be done for God's glory. He reads v.32 as a call not to put stumbling blocks before unbelievers, Jew or Gentile, or before fellow believers, and v.33 as Paul's summary of his own ministry — giving up his rights and preferences, never his convictions, for the salvation of others, as he had described in 9:19–23. He takes 11:1 as belonging with this paragraph: Paul's example is worth following only because it follows Christ.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that v.31 makes even eating and drinking an act of worship, and asks whether what we do brings glory to God or merely pleases us. He reads "give no offense" as avoiding needless stumbling blocks, not avoiding the offense of the gospel itself. On v.33 he stresses that Paul's flexibility was always for the sake of the gospel — he would give up anything but the truth to see people saved — and he connects it to 11:1: we are to imitate Paul as he imitated Jesus.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Tomorrow I will pick one ordinary thing — a meal, a commute, a task at work — and do it consciously for the glory of God.*
- *Whose salvation am I willing to inconvenience myself for? I will name him and lay down one preference for his sake.*

† Word Studies

Twenty-four words carry the weight of the chapter — the vocabulary of the wilderness, the temple feast and the Lord's table. Each card gives the Greek, the NASB rendering, and why it matters here.

πνευματικός **pneumatikos**

SPIRITUAL · 1 COR 10:3, 4

Belonging to the Spirit — supernatural in source. The manna and the water were real food and drink, but given by God and pointing beyond themselves. Three times in two verses.

πέτρα **petra**

ROCK · 1 COR 10:4

A rock mass, a cliff — the rock struck at Horeb (Exodus 17) and at Kadesh (Numbers 20). "And the rock was Christ": the One who supplied Israel's water in the wilderness was the Son.

ἐβαπτίσαντο εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν **ebaptisanto eis ton Mōusēn**

BAPTIZED INTO MOSES · 1 COR 10:2

(Some manuscripts read ἐβαπτίσθησαν, "were baptized.") Joined to Moses and his leadership by passing under the cloud and through the sea — an Old Testament picture of what baptism into Christ means, and of how little the outward sign protects a heart that turns away.

τύπος **typos**

EXAMPLE · 1 COR 10:6, 11

The mark left by a blow, then a pattern or model. Israel's history is a pattern stamped for us to read. Verse 11 has the adverb, *typikōs* — "by way of example."

ἐπιθυμητής **epithymētēs**

ONE WHO CRAVES · 1 COR 10:6

One who sets his desire on something. Only here in the New Testament. The first of the five sins is a craving — the root under idolatry, immorality, testing God and grumbling.

εἰδωλολάτρης **eidōlolatrēs**

IDOLATER · 1 COR 10:7

A servant of an image. Paul quotes Exodus 32:6, the golden calf: a feast that turned into revelry. The Corinthians' temple dinners were the same kind of meal.

παίζω **paizō**

PLAY · 1 COR 10:7

To play, to sport — in Exodus 32 the dancing and revelry around the calf. Eating, drinking and "play" were typical elements of a pagan festival.

πορνεύω **porneuō**

ACT IMMORALLY · 1 COR 10:8

To commit sexual immorality. Numbers 25: Israel joined the Moabites in the worship of Baal of Peor. Paul has already warned Corinth against sexual sin (6:12–20).

ἐκπειράζω **ekpeirazō**

TRY, PUT TO THE TEST · 1 COR 10:9

To put to the test, to push God to see whether He will act. Here the KJV reads "Christ," following other manuscripts — the same Lord Paul has just called the Rock (v.4). Numbers 21: Israel spoke against God and Moses, and the serpents came.

γογγύζω **gongyzō**

GRUMBLE · 1 COR 10:10

A word that sounds like what it means — a low muttering. Grumbling is treated as seriously as idolatry, because it accuses God of failing.

ὀλοθρευτής **olothreutēs**

DESTROYER · 1 COR 10:10

Only here in the New Testament. The agent of God's judgment — compare the destroyer at the Passover (Exodus 12:23).

νουθεσία **nouthesia**

INSTRUCTION, ADMONITION · 1 COR 10:11

Literally a "putting in mind" — instruction that warns. Scripture was written for this: to put Israel's story in our mind before we repeat it.

πειρασμός **peirasmos**

TEMPTATION, TRIAL · 1 COR 10:13

Testing or temptation; context decides. Here it covers the pressures that lure toward sin. None is unique to me — every one is "common to man."

πιστός **pistos**

FAITHFUL · 1 COR 10:13

Trustworthy, reliable. Verse 13 rests not on my strength but on God's character: God is faithful (compare 1:9).

ἔκβασις **ekbasis**

WAY OF ESCAPE · 1 COR 10:13

A way out — used of a pass through mountains. With the definite article: *the* way out, provided with each temptation.

φεύγω **pheugō**

FLEE · 1 COR 10:14

To run away. Not "manage" idolatry, not debate it — flee it. The same command is given about immorality (6:18).

κοινωνία **koinōnia**

SHARING, COMMUNION · 1 COR 10:16

Participation, fellowship, a common share. The cup and the bread are a real sharing in Christ's blood and body — what Christ died to give, received together.

εὐλογία **eulogia**

BLESSING · 1 COR 10:16

Blessing, literally "speaking well of"; here thanksgiving. "The cup of blessing" was the Jewish name for the cup over which thanks was given at the Passover meal — the cup Jesus took.

ἄρτος **artos**

BREAD, LOAF · 1 COR 10:16, 17

A loaf of bread. One loaf, many people, one body (v. 17): eating from the one loaf shows and seals the unity of the church.

κοινωνός **koinōnos**

SHARER, PARTNER · 1 COR 10:18, 20

A partner, one who has a share. Israel's worshipers were partners in the altar; idol-feasters become partners with demons. Eating is never neutral at a sacred meal.

δαιμόνιον **daimonion**

DEMON · 1 COR 10:20, 21

An evil spirit. Four times in two verses. The idol is nothing (8:4), but the worship given to it does not go to nothing — it goes to demons (Deuteronomy 32:17).

παραζηλόω **parazēloō**

PROVOKE TO JEALOUSY · 1 COR 10:22

To stir to jealous anger. Taken from Deuteronomy 32:21. God's jealousy is the love of a husband who will not share his bride.

συμφέρω **sympherō**

BE PROFITABLE · 1 COR 10:23, 33

To bring together, to be of benefit. Lawful is not the only question; the next is, does it help — and whom? Verse 33 uses the same root: "the profit of the many."

συνείδησις **syneidēsis**

CONSCIENCE · 1 COR 10:25, 27, 28, 29

Co-knowledge — the inner witness that judges my actions. Five times in vv.25–29. Paul protects the weak conscience without letting it rule the strong one's freedom before God.

† Why Idolatry Is So Serious

Paul agrees that an idol is nothing (8:4; 10:19) — and yet commands the church to flee idolatry (10:14). Eight reasons from this chapter and the rest of Scripture why idolatry is never a small thing, even for believers who know better.

1. **It is the first sin named in the commandments.**

   "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Every other sin grows from giving the place that belongs to God to something else. Paul's five sins in vv.6–10 begin with craving and end with grumbling, and idolatry is named second, right after the craving.

2. **Privilege does not protect from it.**

   All Israel was under the cloud, through the sea, fed and watered by Christ — "nevertheless" (v.5). Baptism and the Lord's Supper are gifts, not guarantees; the Corinthians thought otherwise and Paul showed them the graves.

3. **Behind the nothing stands a something.**

   The idol is nothing (v.19) — wood and stone (Deuteronomy 4:28) — but "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons" (v.20; Deuteronomy 32:17). Worship is never neutral. It goes somewhere.

4. **It is a betrayal of a covenant love.**

   "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" (v.22). God's jealousy is not insecurity but covenant love — a husband who will not share his bride. Idolatry is spiritual adultery (Hosea 2; Jeremiah 3:6–9).

5. **It cannot share a table with Christ.**

   "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" (v.21). The Lord's Supper is a real sharing in Christ (v.16). To sit at both tables is not liberty; it is contradiction.

6. **It begins with desire.**

   Paul's purpose in naming the five is "so that we would not crave evil things" (v.6), and Scripture traces sin back to desire: "each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" (James 1:14). Colossians 3:5 calls greed "idolatry." Idols are not only statues; they are whatever we set our heart on in God's place.

7. **The safe response is flight.**

   "Flee from idolatry" (v.14; compare 1 John 5:21). Paul does not tell the strong to prove their strength by staying close. The way of escape God provides (v.13) is usually the door.

8 **It robs God of His glory.**

"Do all to the glory of God" (v.31). "My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8). The chapter moves from the idol feast (vv.7, 14–22) to the glory of God (v.31), because the two are opposites.

† Reading the Chapter Whole

The five movements, the word studies and the cross-references pulled into one reading — what the chapter is doing, and the threads that tie it to the rest of the letter and to the gospel.

1 **One warning, one promise, one command.**

Read whole, the chapter moves from Israel's graves (vv.1–10), to the warning "take heed" (v.12), to the promise "God is faithful" (v.13), to the command "flee from idolatry" (v.14). Warning without promise would crush; promise without warning would excuse. Paul gives both.

2 **Chapters 8–10 are one argument.**

Chapter 8: love limits knowledge. Chapter 9: Paul gives up his rights and disciplines himself so as not to be disqualified. Chapter 10: Israel fell in the wilderness; flee idolatry; use liberty for others; do all to God's glory. "Be imitators of me" (11:1) closes the whole.

3 **Two settings, two answers.**

At the temple feast (vv.14–22) the answer is no, because the meal is worship and the worship goes to demons. At the market and the private table (vv.25–30) the answer is yes — unless someone's conscience turns the meal into a statement. Paul distinguishes where the Corinthians blurred.

4 **Every table is a sharing.**

The Lord's table is a sharing in Christ (v.16); Israel's altar was a sharing (v.18); the idol's feast is a sharing with demons (v.20). Eating is never just eating when it is an act of worship.

5 **Freedom is real and answerable to love.**

"All things are lawful" stands (v.23); so does "the earth is the Lord's" (v.26). But the next questions are "profitable?" and "edifying?" — and the answer is measured by "his neighbor" (v.24).

6 **The widest horizon last.**

The chapter starts with meat and ends with "whatever you do" (v.31). The glory of God is not one consideration among many; it is the frame for all of them, and the salvation of the many is its outworking (v.33).

7 **The teachers agree on the spine.**

MacArthur and Guzik read the chapter the same way at its center: Israel's fall is a real warning, God's faithfulness is a real comfort, idolatry means fellowship with demons, liberty is limited by love, and all of life belongs to the glory of God. Where they speak about the Lord's Supper, both describe a real spiritual communion with Christ, not a change in the bread and cup.

† The Passage in the Whole Bible

Scripture interprets Scripture. These passages stand behind Paul's argument or carry it forward — the exodus and the wilderness, the warnings of Moses, the Lord's Supper, and the freedom that serves.

Exodus 13:21

"The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night."

"All under the cloud" (10:1) — God's presence leading every one of them.

Exodus 14:22

"The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."

"All passed through the sea" (10:1).

Exodus 16:15

"When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

The spiritual food (10:3) — bread from God.

Exodus 17:6

""Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

The spiritual drink (10:4) — and God standing on the rock.

John 6:35

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

What the manna and the water pointed to.

Numbers 14:29

"your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me."

"Laid low in the wilderness" (10:5).

Hebrews 3:17

"And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?"

The same warning drawn from the same generation.

Numbers 11:4

"The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"

Craving evil things (10:6).

Exodus 32:6

“So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.”

The verse Paul quotes in 10:7 — a feast for an idol.

Numbers 25:9

“Those who died by the plague were 24,000.”

The plague at Baal of Peor (10:8).

Numbers 21:6

“The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.”

“Destroyed by the serpents” (10:9).

Romans 15:4

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

“Written for our instruction” (10:11) — and for hope.

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

“Let him who thinks he stands” (10:12).

James 1:13

“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”

God limits temptation; He is never its author.

Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

“Common to man” — and to our High Priest.

2 Peter 2:9

“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,”

God is faithful (10:13).

1 Corinthians 6:18

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

The same verb: flee (10:14).

1 John 5:21

“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

The last line of John’s letter — the same command.

Luke 22:20

“And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.”

The cup of blessing (10:16).

1 Corinthians 11:26

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

What the shared bread and cup proclaim.

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

One loaf, one body (10:17).

Leviticus 7:15

“Now as for the flesh of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace offerings, it shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it over until morning.”

Israel ate from the altar (10:18).

Deuteronomy 32:17

“They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.”

The source of 10:20.

Deuteronomy 32:21

“They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,”

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (10:22).

2 Corinthians 6:16

“Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”

Two temples, two tables, no agreement.

1 Corinthians 6:12

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

The same slogan, answered another way.

1 Corinthians 8:13

“Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

Love sets the limit on liberty (10:28–29).

Psalm 24:1

“The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.”

Quoted in 10:26.

1 Timothy 4:4

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;”

Eating with thankfulness (10:30).

Colossians 3:17

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

“Whatever you do” (10:31).

1 Corinthians 9:22

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

Paul’s pattern in 10:33.

1 Corinthians 11:1

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

The sentence that finishes chapter 10.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Five movements, three questions

The inductive walk in one table: what the text says, what it means, what it asks.

THE MOVEMENT	OBSERVE	INTERPRET	APPLY
All of them (10:1–5)	All ×5; cloud, sea, food, drink; the rock was Christ; nevertheless	Privilege is not protection	Stop trusting past blessings
For our instruction (10:6–13)	Five sins; examples; take heed; God is faithful	Israel's history is a warning; God limits every temptation	Look for the way of escape
One table (10:14–22)	Flee; sharing; one bread; demons; you cannot	Every sacred meal is fellowship; idolatry is fellowship with demons	Flee, don't negotiate
Lawful, but (10:23–30)	All things lawful; profitable; edify; market; conscience ×5	Freedom is real and measured by love	Lay freedom down for another
To God's glory (10:31–33)	Whatever you do; give no offense; that they may be saved	One aim governs all of life	Do one ordinary thing for His glory

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-33 · AN INDUCTIVE READING

† Teaching Outline for the Table

Forty-five minutes, five parts. Built so the men do the reading and the chapter does the work.

PART	WHAT TO DO
Open (5 min)	Read vv.1–5 aloud and count the "all"s. Ask: what privileges do we count on? Land on "nevertheless."
The five sins (10 min)	Read vv.6–11. Assign one sin to each man to find in Numbers or Exodus. Which one is closest to our door today?
Take heed — and take heart (10 min)	Read vv.12–13. Ask each man to name a temptation he thought he could handle. What was the way of escape? Did he take it?
One table (10 min)	Read vv.14–22. Ask: what are the "temple feasts" of our culture — places where worship quietly goes to something else? What would fleeing look like?
Close (10 min)	Read vv.23–24 and 31–33. Each man names one freedom he will lay down this week for someone else's good, and one ordinary act he will do to the glory of God.

† Key Insights to Carry

- **"Our fathers."** Paul gives a Gentile church Israel's story as its own (v.1). The warnings of the Old Testament are family history.
- **The rock was Christ.** The Son of God supplied Israel in the desert (v.4). The One who fed them is the One we meet at His table.
- **Privilege is not protection.** All five blessings, and "nevertheless" (v.5). Baptism and communion are gifts, not guarantees.
- **Watch the desire.** Paul names the five sins "so that we would not crave evil things" (v.6). Sin begins as desire (James 1:14–15).
- **The confident are the vulnerable.** "Let him who thinks he stands take heed" (v.12).
- **God is faithful in every temptation.** Nothing unique, nothing beyond what I can bear, never without a way out (v.13).
- **The way out is often the door.** "Flee from idolatry" (v.14) follows the promise of escape at once.
- **Every sacred table is a sharing.** The cup and the bread are a real sharing in Christ (v.16); an idol's feast is sharing with demons (v.20).
- **Lawful is the first question, not the last.** Profitable? Edifying? For whom? (vv.23–24).
- **Glory is the frame of everything.** From meat to "whatever you do" (v.31) — and the salvation of the many (v.33).

† Questions for the Table

1. **Why does Paul list Israel's privileges with the word "all" five times?**

   To show that every one of them was blessed — and most still fell. Privilege is not protection.

   1 COR 10:1-5

2. **What does Paul mean by "the rock was Christ"?**

   The One who supplied Israel's water in the desert was the Son of God before His incarnation.

   1 COR 10:4; EXOD 17:6

3 **Why were Israel's failures "written for our instruction"?**

So the church, at the ends of the ages, would learn from them instead of repeating them.

1 COR 10:6, 11; ROM 15:4

4 **Why does Paul frame the five sins with "so that we would not crave evil things"?**

Because sin starts as desire before it becomes an act (compare James 1:14–15).

1 COR 10:6; JAS 1:14-15

5 **Who is most at risk according to v.12?**

The one who thinks he stands — confidence in oneself is the danger.

1 COR 10:12

6 **What three comforts does v.13 give?**

Temptation is common; God is faithful and limits it; He always provides the way of escape.

1 COR 10:13

7 **If an idol is nothing, why must believers flee idolatry?**

Because the worship offered to idols goes to demons, and eating at their feast is fellowship with them.

1 COR 10:14, 19-20

8 **What does "sharing" (koinonia) teach about the Lord's Supper?**

It is a real participation in what Christ's body and blood accomplished, received together as one body.

1 COR 10:16-17

9 **When may a believer eat meat that had been offered to an idol, and when not?**

At the market or a private meal, freely; not when someone points it out and eating would endorse the idol or wound a conscience.

1 COR 10:25-29

10 **What one ordinary thing will you do this week "to the glory of God"?**

"Whatever you do" — no part of life is outside His glory.

1 COR 10:31

❖

Paul starts this chapter in the wilderness among the graves of people who had every blessing, and he ends it at the dinner table with the glory of God. The road between them is short: take heed, because you can fall; take heart, because God is faithful; flee from every table but His; and then eat, drink and do whatever you do so that God is honored and your neighbor is helped toward Christ. "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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